

“Where the need was greatest, we chose to go.”

An account of how communities devastated by Typhoon Tino in Cebu found hope, dignity, and deliverance through ordinary heroes, unwavering faith, and compassion

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In early November, while Cebu was still staggering from the 6.9-magnitude earthquake a few weeks

earlier, *Typhoon Tino* (international name *Kalmaegi*) slammed into the province with unimaginable force — turning an already wounded land into a heartbreakingly double disaster.

Communities barely regaining their footing were crushed again by torrents of rain that unleashed flash floods, swallowing homes up to the second floor and driving thousands into the night. Rivers broke their banks. Hillsides collapsed. Entire villages were torn open.

The toll was staggering: more than 200 lives lost, dozens missing, and over 6,000 homes destroyed in Cebu City alone. Power grids collapsed, water systems failed, communication lines fell silent. Livelihoods vanished. Farms drowned, stores shuttered, small businesses washed away — dreams painstakingly rebuilt after the quake swept clean in hours.

The ground had barely stopped trembling when another force of nature roared in. Fierce. Unrelenting. Unforgiving. Waters rose like dark hands, taking whatever remained. Homes that survived the quake disappeared in a single night. What people had rebuilt with trembling hope was torn apart again.

And yet, when the floods came — compassion came running.

When Help Rushed to the Wound

Like blood surging toward an open wound, help flowed to where the pain was deepest. The youth arm of the *Kalinangan Foundation, Inc.* (KALFI Serv) and the *Banilad Center for Professional Development* (BCPD) under the *Foundation for Professional Training, Inc.* (FPTI) formed a swift alliance for relief.

It began with urgent pleas from two Kalfi leaders in the north: Myles in Consolacion and Safina in Liloan. Their families' small businesses — a hopia factory and a bakery — were swallowed whole by the storm. Myles' own home lay underwater.

KALFI volunteers immediately assembled relief packs — rice, water, clothes, food — and drove toward the flood-scarred towns. They brought supplies, but more than that, they brought the Kalfi spirit: *“We serve. Especially when it hurts.”*

The Father Who Dove Into the Flood

In Consolacion, as waters raged through their home, Myles' father dove into the flood to rescue their beloved image of the Sto. Niño. Then, thinking of his workers trapped inside, he tore out the air-conditioning unit on the second floor

— creating the only hole through which they could escape.

Families climbed to the roof, trembling in the rain until morning.

“Everything was gone,” Myles’ mother later said, letting out a soft laugh through her fear. “And I must have shrunk just to fit through that aircon hole.” Even in tragedy, her humor glimmered like light through storm clouds.

The Cry of the Evacuees — and the ₱50 Miracle

When the storm ended, the silence felt heavier than the rain. At BCPD, staff member Malu immediately checked on students in the hardest-hit areas. The director, vice director, staff, volunteers, and students drove through mud-filled roads to visit evacuation centers in Paknaan, Cubacub, Liloan, and Compostela.

They brought what little they had — barely enough for their list of students and families.

But the moment their van entered Paknaan Elementary School, a crowd rushed toward them. Not one line — many. Faces wet from rain and tears. Hunger everywhere.

“We only had enough for those on our list,” a volunteer whispered. “But how do you say no to hunger?”

They messaged their two small-scale caterer contacts — Ma’am Joy and Ma’am Herminia. The team could offer only ₱50 per meal (rice, egg, hotdog). That was hardly profitable for the caterers. For a while, there was silence.

Then Ma’am Joy replied: “*Tabang na namo, Ma’am.*” (*This is also our help, Ma’am.*)

The second caterer joined without hesitation.

That night, volunteers scrambled to raise funds. *KALFI Serv Manila* responded. A generous donor stepped in. By morning, they had enough for 1,000 meals.

The next day, they returned with breakfast for 1,000 evacuees. Amid the smell of wet clothes and exhaustion, something shifted. Faces brightened. Children smiled. Parents whispered quiet thanks that felt like prayer.

A simple miracle — one that smelled of breakfast and mercy.

Cathy: The Rosary That Survived

In Liloan, Cathy's house was gone. Her father drove her, her siblings, and an aunt - who was recovering from cataract surgery - through

floods and debris. It was a perilous trip on a small motorcycle.

“*Were you afraid?*” a volunteer asked Cathy.

“*Dili, Miss,*” she smiled. “*Kay naa man si Papa.*”

(*No, Miss — Papa was there.*)

She saved only one thing: a rosary given during the month of the Holy Rosary. It glistened in her hands — a lifeline that never snapped.

Gritchen: The River Took Everything

In Pulangbato, the river rose in fury and wiped out eleven homes. When the Kalfi team arrived, a young woman stood before the remains of a roof. Thinking it was hers, a volunteer asked to take a photo.

She shook her head gently. “*This is not my house,*” she said. “*This is,*”

pointing to the bare ground beneath her feet.

Gritchen's father approached them. When asked how they were, he said softly, voice tightening: "*Dawat namo, Ma'am. Lisod lang hunahunaon unsaon pagsugod balik.*" (*We accept this, Ma'am... it's just hard to think how to start again.*)

Gritchen, a student and the family's breadwinner, was away working when the disaster struck. Now they begin rebuilding from the mud.

Danica: The Sacred Heart That Stayed

In Cubacub, Danica's family fled their home for higher ground. Her older brother stayed to guard what little they owned. When the flood rose higher, her mother prayed through tears for his safety.

He survived by climbing onto the roof — cold, shaken, but alive.

The next morning, mud covered everything in their home.

Everything, except one thing: an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus — untouched.

A quiet glow amid ruin.

When Tears Fell Like Rain, Faith Rose

Faith rose faster than the flood.

When homes collapsed, hope built shelter in hearts that refused to give up. And when the world fell silent, love spoke loudest — in helping hands, shared meals, whispered prayers, and small miracles.

Today, we continue to bring whatever we can — plates, blankets, towels, soap — the small dignities that matter when everything else has been washed away.

A Kalfi organizer said, “Kapuy na...” (*I'm tired already...*) then quickly took it back: “*But when you see courage bloom in chaos, love shine through loss, and volunteers restoring dignity — you know this is sacred ground.*”

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